



MARYLAND'S

# UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

NETWORK TO FREEDOM



# EXPERIENCE AFRICAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE *in Frederick City & County*



## Catoctin Furnace, Thurmont

The historic Catoctin Furnace produced iron products from the time of the American Revolution to the 20th century. Today the furnace and surrounding village tell the stories of the community of free and enslaved people who lived and worked there.



NATIONAL  
UNDERGROUND RAILROAD  
NETWORK TO FREEDOM



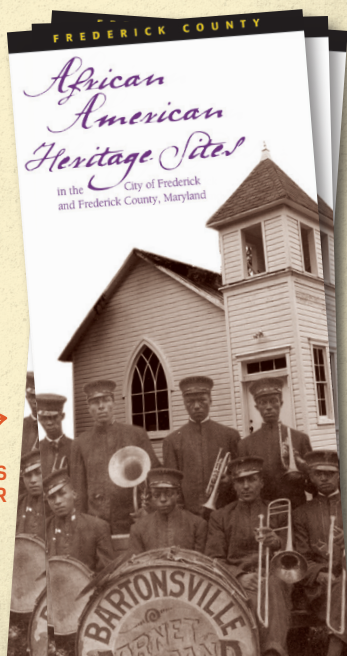
Immerse yourself in more than two centuries of history and culture with our African-American Heritage Sites brochure. Discover these compelling stories at locations in Downtown Frederick and around the county.

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CITY & COUNTY



EMBARK ON THIS  
SELF-GUIDED TOUR





Take a powerful road trip  
to the land where  
Harriet Tubman's  
journey began

# HARRIET TUBMAN

Liberator. Spy. Nurse. War hero.  
Suffragist. Freedom fighter.

Experience the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center  
and explore the places where she carried out her heroic feats.

Dorchester County on  
Maryland's Eastern Shore

FREEDOM  
HARRIET  
TUBMAN  
UNDERGROUND  
RAILROAD BYWAY

HEART OF THE CHESAPEAKE  
DORCHESTER  
water moves us

[HarrietTubmanByway.org](http://HarrietTubmanByway.org) | 410.228.1000





## DEAR FRIENDS:

In the years leading up to emancipation, Maryland emerged as a major hub of support for the Underground Railroad. The inspiring stories you'll find in this guide — and the places and people you'll discover — are why Maryland is The Most Powerful Underground Railroad Storytelling Destination in the World. We are proud to share the stories of these brave Marylanders who, during a troubled and dark period in our history, stood up for what is right. People like the courageous hero Harriet Tubman and the brilliant orator and abolitionist Frederick Douglass stood in the face of racism and slavery and risked everything, not just for their own freedom, but for the freedom of all people and the fulfillment of the American ideal.



With beautiful sites across the state, from the Eastern Shore of the Chesapeake Bay to the rolling green peaks of the Allegheny Mountains in the west, you will find unparalleled beauty — places unchanged since they stood as the backdrop for these remarkable stories. These pages are an invitation to travel back through time and experience the bravery of the men, women and children who took dangerous journeys on the Underground Railroad and fought for true freedom.

We invite you to use this guide, as well as our website, [VisitMaryland.org](http://VisitMaryland.org), and our official travel guide, *Destination Maryland*, to explore our wonderful state and explore the captivating story of Maryland's role in the struggle for freedom in America.

### Explore Maryland's Underground Railroad Online:



SCAN ME

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On the cover: Mural by Michael Rosato; Photograph by Jill Jasuta.





**T**he National Park Service created the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom to commemorate the places and people who shaped the journey to freedom. At Maryland's Network to Freedom sites, programs and research facilities, you can discover the heroic stories of the daring men, women and children who escaped from slavery, learn how they fought for freedom and discover who helped them flee.



The National Park Service, through the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program, coordinates preservation and education efforts nationwide for authentic Underground Railroad sites, programs and facilities that are members of the Network to Freedom.

All sites listed in this guide have been approved by the National Park Service as authentic Underground Railroad sites. All programs have been approved by the National Park Service as providing authentic Underground Railroad information.

By visiting Maryland's Network to Freedom sites and programs, you can experience why Maryland is the epicenter of powerful Underground Railroad storytelling destinations.

Learn more at [www.nps.gov/ugrr](http://www.nps.gov/ugrr).

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### SEE MAP AND LIST OF NETWORK TO FREEDOM SITES

in the center of the guide following page 9



**Maryland**

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
OFFICE OF TOURISM

**GOVERNOR**  
Wes Moore

**LT. GOVERNOR**  
Aruna Miller

**MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
OFFICE OF TOURISM**  
World Trade Center  
401 East Pratt Street  
Baltimore, MD 21202  
410-767-3400, 1-877-209-5883  
[www.visitmaryland.org](http://www.visitmaryland.org)

**MANAGING EDITOR**  
Brian Michael Lawrence

**EXECUTIVE EDITOR**  
Anne Kyle

**ART DIRECTOR**  
Myeisha Barclay

**GRAPHIC DESIGNER**  
John Bright

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6751 Professional Pkwy, Ste. 200,  
Sarasota, FL 34240; 800-683-0010;  
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# JOURNEY TO FREEDOM

What is the Underground Railroad, and Why Did It Exist Here?

**I**magine that you were snatched away from your home and carried on a ship (a filthy ship, filled with sickness and death) to a place far away from everything you'd ever known.

Or, maybe you never had to leave the land where you were born, but knew that at any moment, everyone you loved could be sent away and never be seen again. This is what enslaved Africans and African Americans in the United States and in Maryland faced every day for more than 200 years before the Civil War. Denied the freedom to be with their loved ones, to work for pay and live freely, enslaved people craved freedom.

Enslaved labor produced handsome profits and lavish lifestyles for many slaveholders and their families. When Maryland shifted from tobacco growing to the grain industry (which meant it needed fewer laborers), slave traders in this state turned a profit selling human beings into the

Fugitive slaves escaping from the Eastern Shore of Maryland.  
From the New York Public Library

Deep South to fuel cotton and rice growing. Slavery existed for almost 250 years in the United States and was an inexorable part of its foundation and expansion.

The world, then, was stacked against enslaved African Americans who wanted to be free. Those who attempted escape were chased by slave catchers who turned a profit by hunting fugitives. Slaveholders put advertisements in newspapers or posted signs offering rewards for the capture of runaways. High bounties for their capture made reaching freedom extremely difficult. Citizens were tempted to turn them in. Some freedom seekers were betrayed; others could not outrun bounty hunters

equipped with dogs and guns. If caught, slaves could be whipped, branded and mutilated.

Still, that didn't stop everyone from yearning for freedom.

Many enslaved African Americans did more than just yearn: they actively fought against the institution of slavery. Many committed acts of defiance: from refusing to work, to sabotage, poisonings, arson and violence. Some people tried to run away. All resistance was illegal and met with harsh punishment and even death.

Luckily, there were people – both black and white – who knew slavery was evil and wanted to do something about it. They established the foundation for what would be the Underground Railroad.

The Underground Railroad was a system of support for freedom seekers that got its start in the 1700s, providing resources for the enslaved to reach freedom. It was a system of secrets and whispers. It was hidden spaces carved out by free and enslaved African Americans and by sympathetic whites. Everyone involved played a role. There were people who acted as guides



Thomas Moran (American, 1837–1926). *Slave Hunt, Dismal Swamp, Virginia*, 1861-62. Oil on canvas, 34 × 44". Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Gift of Laura A. Clubb, 1947.8.44.





(one of the most famous was Harriet Tubman), people who arranged for safe houses, people who hid freedom seekers on their property and those who transported them in wagons or ships or paid for their travel.

Where could fugitive enslaved African Americans go to live safely? Laws mandating the return of escapees were harsh – even in the northern parts of the United States. Despite potential punishment, efforts to liberate the enslaved never stopped and actually intensified. Vigilance committees in northern cities coordinated the elaborate communication and relief networks that served fleeing slaves. Slave escapes escalated. Many looked to Canada where slavery was illegal.

Frustrated over increasing losses, Southern slaveholders in border states like Maryland and Virginia tightened their grip on both free and enslaved African Americans. As the Civil War approached,

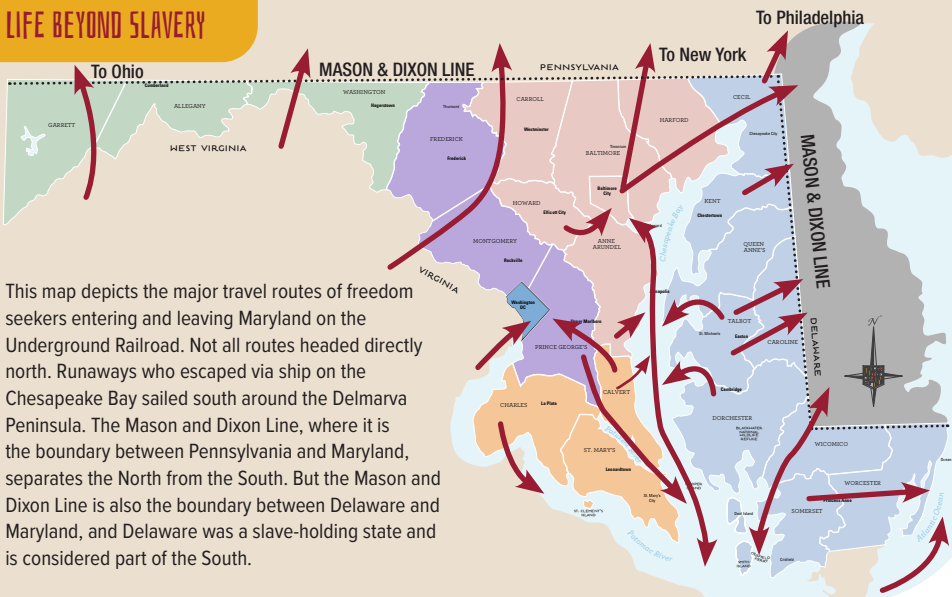


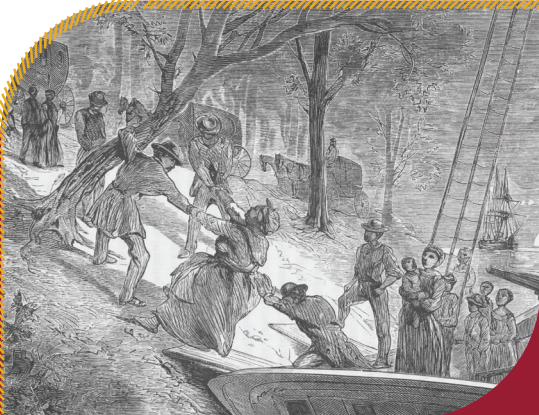
An original slave cabin at Sotterley Plantation depicts living conditions for the enslaved.

slaveholders were fully aware of the Underground Railroad but unsure of its actual operations. They imagined white abolitionists infiltrating their communities and enticing enslaved people to run away, never acknowledging that they might want to be free all on their own. Many came to suspect free blacks as the most dangerous threat to the slave system. In Maryland and elsewhere in the South, local

governments enacted laws to keep African Americans under the tightest control. Freedom seekers became deeply cautious, and rightfully so. Countless escapes were foiled by the betrayal of friends, family, and by vigilante whites in the community eager for high monetary rewards. As activities drew the nation closer to conflict, only the Civil War would bring about the end of slavery and the need for the Underground Railroad.

## LIFE BEYOND SLAVERY





Heavy Weights – Arrival of a Party at League Island. Image from William Still, "The Underground Railroad," 1872 edition. From the New York Public Library.



Quaker Underground Railroad agent Thomas Garrett from Wilmington, Delaware provided a critical link for freedom seekers on their way to Pennsylvania. Courtesy of Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, PA.

## Spotlight: Life Beyond Slavery

Enslaved African Americans who had escaped the chains of slavery were looking for the things everyone craves – community, familiarity and safety. Many who fled prior to 1850 stayed in nearby states, joining existing communities of free African Americans throughout the North. One common path to freedom included a stop in Wilmington, Delaware where Thomas Garrett organized a system of ferrying freedom seekers into Pennsylvania. Once they were there, they could go to Philadelphia, which was already home to a large free black population.

If they so desired, escaping African Americans seeking freedom could use the Underground Railroad to go further north. People like William Still in Philadelphia helped freedom seekers get to New York City, Boston and New Bedford, Massachusetts. They could also go to places like Rochester, New York where famed abolitionist and Maryland

native Frederick Douglass operated a station. Freedom seekers followed routes to Buffalo for safe passage across Lake Ontario or Lake Erie, or they crossed near Niagara Falls. Others went to Elmira, New York, where John W. Jones funneled many to Canada to settle in St. Catharines, Hamilton, Toronto and Owen Sound. Runaways fleeing Western Maryland traveled through southwestern Pennsylvania into Ohio and Indiana toward Detroit or the shores of Lake Erie, where they sailed to western Ontario. These self-liberators settled in places like Windsor, Chatham and Buxton, where they built new lives in freedom. While some freedom seekers returned to Maryland after the Civil War, many remained in the North. Thousands came back to the United States from their temporary homes in Canada, settling in northern communities with friends and relatives to rebuild social, religious and cultural relationships shattered by slavery. In this way, the path to freedom forever changed the way communities looked all over North America and beyond.





# Follow the path of African-American history throughout Howard County.

[www.HoCoHeritage.com](http://www.HoCoHeritage.com)

1-800-288-TRIP (8747)

[www.VisitHowardCounty.com](http://www.VisitHowardCounty.com)

Images courtesy of the Howard County Historical Society

Visit  
Howard  
County  
Maryland



# TOP 10 NOT-TO-MISS NETWORK TO FREEDOM SITES, PROGRAMS AND TOURS

## 1. A Journey Begins: Nature's Role in the Flight to Freedom, an Audio Tour

Adkins Arboretum  
12610 Eveland Road  
Ridgely, MD 21660  
410 634-2847

[https://www.adkinsarboretum.org/about\\_us/title/audio-tours](https://www.adkinsarboretum.org/about_us/title/audio-tours)

A self-guided audio tour based on slave narratives tells the little-known story of how Maryland's natural environment influenced the challenges, successes and failures of escapes. Freedom seekers navigated using the stars, landscape and waterways through places like this, finding food and shelter along the way.

## 2. Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center

4068 Golden Hill Road  
Church Creek, MD 21622  
410 221-2290

<http://dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands/pages/eastern/tubman.aspx>

The visitor center includes exhibits and a theater that tell the stories of Harriet Tubman's life and work in slavery and her escape. The center immerses visitors in the secret networks of the Underground Railroad and Tubman's own daring rescue missions. Also learn about Tubman's actions during the Civil War and later years as a suffragist, civil rights worker, and humanitarian.

## 3. Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Scenic Byway

Visitor Center at Sailwinds Park  
2 Rose Hill Place  
Cambridge, MD 21613  
410 228-1000

[www.harriettubmanbyway.org](http://www.harriettubmanbyway.org)

This 125-mile driving tour with an audio guide visits sites that illustrate the Underground Railroad story and Harriet Tubman's rescue missions on Maryland's Eastern Shore. It highlights three dozen sites, such as the Dorchester County Courthouse, Bucktown Store, Brodess Farm, and the Denton Steamboat Wharf on the Choptank River. These were the settings of bold and dangerous activities of people like Harriet Tubman, Underground Railroad agents and freedom seekers, and where slave catchers captured fugitives.



The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center includes immersive exhibits about Tubman's life and is a great place to get oriented to traveling the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway.

## 4. Hampton National Historic Site

535 Hampton Lane  
Towson, MD 21286  
410 823-1309

<https://www.nps.gov/hamp/index.htm>

Enslaved people and indentured servants worked long days harvesting and shipping tons of grain, iron and timber here for ships bound for Europe, providing a lavish lifestyle for the Ridgely family at this Georgian mansion. Nearly 100 enslaved people escaped from this plantation, which was home to more than 340 slaves. Restored slave quarters include exhibits about their lives and escapes.

## 5. President Street Station/ Baltimore Civil War Museum

601 President Street  
Baltimore, MD 21202  
410 220-0290

<http://baltimore.org/listings/historic-sites/baltimore-civil-war-museum-president-street-station>

Located in the historic President Street Station (c. 1849), the oldest surviving railroad station in an urban setting, the museum tells the stories of Baltimore's role in the Underground Railroad, the Civil War and Maryland's railroad history. Enslaved people sometimes escaped by train, such as Frederick Douglass, who departed Baltimore disguised as a sailor. Another man, Henry "Box" Brown, shipped himself to freedom through this station in a wooden crate.







# ORDINARY PEOPLE, EXTRAORDINARY ACTS

"I prayed to God to make me strong  
and able to fight, and that's what  
I always prayed for ever since."

— Harriet Tubman, 1865





## Josiah Henson

Josiah Henson's 1849 autobiography *The Life of Josiah Henson, Formerly a Slave Now an Inhabitant of Canada* served as a model for the main character in Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which energized the abolitionist movement. Abraham Lincoln believed that this best-selling novel sparked the fire leading to the Civil War.

After laboring enslaved in Maryland for thirty-five years, Henson fled north with his wife and children from Kentucky in the summer of 1830, settling in Dresden, Ontario, Canada. He traveled back into the U.S. to help other enslaved people escape and established a community in Canada as a refuge for freedom seekers.

Image from the New York Public Library

## Samuel Green

A free Black minister, Underground Railroad agent and the father of a freedom seeker, Green was arrested for aiding a group of fugitives, known as the Dover Eight, in their escape from Maryland's Eastern Shore in 1857. When a jury failed to convict him, frustrated slaveholders concocted new charges. Green was imprisoned for owning a copy of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Image from the New York Public Library



## J. W. C. Pennington

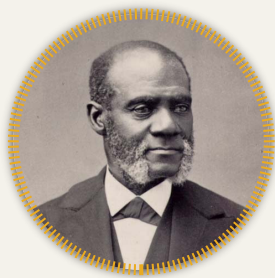
One of the most prominent African-American leaders of the 19th century lived enslaved at Rockland near Sharpsburg and described his life and his dramatic escape in his autobiography *The Fugitive Blacksmith*. Against all odds, Pennington became a powerful Presbyterian minister, abolitionist, civil rights activist and Underground Railroad agent.

Image from the New York Public Library

## Henry Highland Garnet

Henry Highland Garnet was enslaved in Kent County near Chestertown. Garnet and his family escaped to New York when he was about 9 years old. In the 1840s, he became an abolitionist, and his "Call to Rebellion" speech in 1843 encouraged slaves to free themselves by rising up against owners. Seen as a radical, he became a controversial figure within the abolitionist movement.

Photo from the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; Artist: James U. Stead





William Still – Photo from the New York Public Library

## William Still Family

William Still was a famous Underground Railroad agent, abolitionist and a member of the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery and its Philadelphia Vigilance Committee. But he is best known for his book *The Underground Railroad* where he documented the stories of freedom seekers who escaped bondage. Still provided food, clothing, shelter, transportation and money to assist those escaping slavery. He assisted Harriet Tubman with her rescue missions and recorded details about them.

Still's mother and brothers had roots near Denton, Maryland. His mother, Charity, escaped slavery in Maryland, but had to leave behind her two oldest sons. The boys were promptly sold south, but one later came through Still's Underground Railroad station in Philadelphia. While assisting a man escape, William realized he was his lost brother Peter, whom he had never met.

Charity Still Twice Escaped from Slavery – Photo from the New York Public Library



## George Wilmer

George Wilmer led a precarious dual life as a conductor on the Underground Railroad and as an enslaved man. Wilmer and his wife Margaret provided a safehouse near Georgetown Crossroads on the Sassafra River, a strategic path to northern Delaware. During one four-month period in 1855, Wilmer forwarded 25 freedom seekers to Quaker Thomas Garrett in Wilmington.



## Rev. Charles Torrey

Rev. Charles Torrey, a northern minister and abolitionist, operated with assistance from an African-American accomplice, Thomas Smallwood. The two of them led approximately 400 freedom seekers out of Virginia, Washington, D.C., and Maryland. Torrey was arrested in 1844 for bringing a woman and her two children away from Baltimore. Smallwood stood to lose his freedom if caught, and successfully fled with his family to Canada.

Crossing the River on Horseback in the Night. Image from William Still, *The Underground Railroad*, 1872 edition. From the New York Public Library.







Photo courtesy of Library of Congress  
Prints and Photographs Division.

## Harriet Tubman

Harriet Tubman is known as the “Moses of Her People” for leading approximately 70 people to freedom as a conductor on the Underground Railroad. She was born enslaved in Dorchester County, Maryland. She escaped in 1849 and made thirteen rescue missions to retrieve family, friends and other enslaved people using a network of antislavery activists and safe houses. Tubman also served as a scout, spy, soldier and nurse for the Union Army during the Civil War and is considered the first African American woman to lead an armed raid. She also worked for the women’s suffrage movement and started the Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged in Auburn, New York. Visit the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park Visitor Center for an overview of her life, then travel the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway to see sites where she lived, worked, worshipped and escaped.

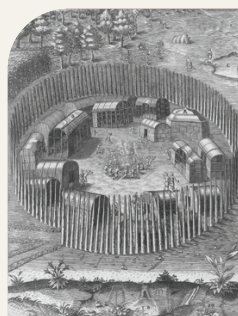


Photo courtesy of Frederick Douglass  
Family Initiatives

## Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass rose above his horrific childhood in slavery to become a self-determined leader, orator, writer and statesman, working for the abolition of slavery and the education of his race. Born in 1818 on the banks of the Tuckahoe Creek, he lived enslaved in Wye Mills, St. Michaels and Baltimore where he taught himself to read, eventually fleeing slavery as a young man disguised as a sailor traveling on the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad. Douglass returned to the Eastern Shore and Annapolis to deliver speeches. He later settled in the Anacostia region of Washington, D.C.

Tour Frederick Douglass historic sites on the Following in His Footsteps – Maryland’s Frederick Douglass Driving Tour.

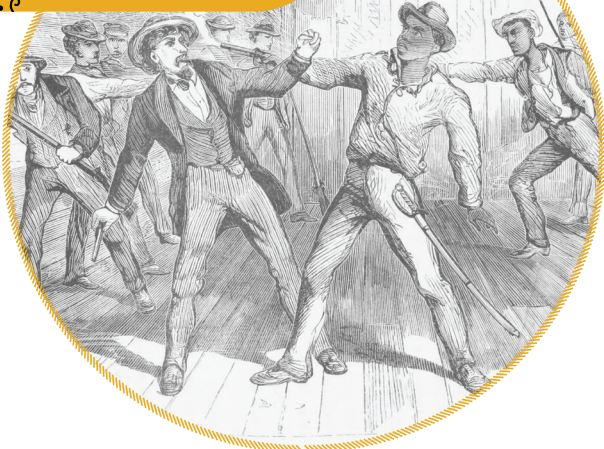


## Nanticokes and Shawnees

Freedom seekers found support and refuge in American Indian communities, such as the Nanticokes and the Shawnees. Maryland and Virginia slaveholders filed court petitions and complaints against these tribes for sheltering runaway slaves in their villages. Shawnee Oldfield Village on the Potomac River near Oldtown was one such community used as a destination by freedom seekers.

Photo: The Towne of Pomeioc, 1590 Village – from de Bry,  
courtesy of The John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

# THE PATH TO FREEDOM



Desperate Conflict in a Barn. Image from William Still, "The Underground Railroad," 1872 edition. From the New York Public Library.

## A Dangerous Journey

Escaping bondage and running to freedom was a dangerous and potentially life-threatening decision. Making the choice to leave loved ones, even children, behind was heart-wrenching. Surviving exposure without proper clothing, finding food and shelter, and navigating into unknown territory while eluding slave catchers all made the journey perilous.

Escaping from Maryland had advantages. Being close to the border with the free North made the journey shorter. Waterways, roadways and trails led to the North. Access to the Chesapeake Bay and its rivers gave fugitives an opportunity to escape via water.

Those enslaved in Maryland often labored on small farms and were frequently hired out by their owners to work for other farmers and businesses. This practice gave the enslaved the opportunity to move between homes, communities and ports, where they could learn about

freedom and possibly escape. Some were offered opportunities to earn their own income.

These unique conditions, such as time apart from an overseer, had advantages for those willing to escape and face the risks and consequences of being caught. But reaching the border could mean freedom.

## Places to Hide – People Who Helped

Most freedom seekers found their way to freedom without any help, but others were given instructions enabling them to pass from one safe place to the next. Some freedom seekers were familiar with maritime navigation and used the North Star and constellations to guide the way.

Along their journeys, freedom seekers sometimes rested comfortably in the homes or churches of friendly supporters, while others hid in swamps or wooded thickets, root cellars, secret rooms, attics, barns, fodder houses and other outbuildings.

## Many Means of Escape

Freedom seekers used several means to escape slavery. Most often they traveled by land on foot, horse or wagon under the protection of darkness. Drivers concealed self-liberators in false compartments built into their wagons, or hid them under loads of produce.



The Denton Steamboat Wharf on the Choptank River is where steamboats loaded with freight and passengers made weekly departures from Denton to Baltimore in 1850.



Sometimes fleeing slaves traveled by train. Frederick Douglass disguised himself as a sailor and escaped on the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad from the President Street Station in Fells Point.

Others used boats in Chesapeake Bay waterways. Sympathetic boat captains hid freedom seekers on their ships. For example, 18-year-old Lear Green shipped herself in a chest aboard a steamship sailing from Baltimore to Philadelphia.

## Tricking Slave Catchers

Runaways often used disguises. Ann Maria Weems dressed as a young man to slip away from her owner, a slave trader from Rockville. Some obtained forged passes that attested to their free status, while others passed as white because of their light skin color or blended into the large free black population in cities.

Some runaways were determined to never be taken back alive. Those who had access to pistols and knives used them when needed, often getting wounded in battles with authorities and slave catchers. For example, in 1851, an angry group of whites and blacks, led by William Parker of Maryland, killed Baltimore County slave owner Edward Gorsuch, who was attempting to re-enslave a self-liberator then living near Christiana, Pennsylvania.



Maryland's Chesapeake Bay and its rivers held advantages as a means of escape for those who courageously raced for liberty.



## THE FLIGHT ON THE CHESAPEAKE



Escaping from Norfolk in Captain Lee's Skiff. Image from William Still, "The Underground Railroad," 1872 edition. From the New York Public Library.

The Chesapeake Bay presented both a barrier and a pathway to freedom. Enslaved workers and free black sailors and dock workers toiled side-by-side on the docks and shipyards. Black sailors called blackjacks moved between ports in the North and Maryland, bringing news of independent, literate, self-sufficient African Americans living in freedom. The idea of escaping via water and the possibility of freedom in far-away places motivated the enslaved.

Those with sailing skills or access to a boat could escape via the water. Some hid in the holds of larger passenger and cargo vessels that were bound for ports in cities throughout the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic seaboard.

Some sympathetic boat captains, like Captains Lambdin and Fountain, personally

stowed runaways aboard their ships. Subject to seizure, boat captains were forced to allow random searches of their boats. Captain Lambdin, whose boat deck was once chopped to pieces by a local sheriff looking for a fugitive, was eventually captured in 1856 and jailed for his role as an Underground Railroad conductor.

Escape on the Chesapeake frequently occurred during war time. Along the rivers up and down the Chesapeake Bay, former slaves ran to safety aboard naval vessels. Thousands joined the British Colonial Marines during the War of 1812, or the Union forces during the Civil War. These enslaved people were called "contrabands" of war by Northern generals who refused to return them to their Confederate owners, toppling the economic power of the South.



# You're going to **LOVE** Kent County<sub>MD</sub>



Visit Maryland's Upper Eastern Shore on the Chesapeake Bay



Many describe the shores of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries as breathtaking and relaxing, for there is something that touches the senses when water abounds. Maryland's smallest County of Kent, a charming peninsula, is a perfect getaway destination. The peaceful vistas and beautiful landscape of rolling hills, farms, vineyards and open space is the perfect setting to get away from the hustle and bustle of daily life.

Enjoy the peace and beauty, but be ready to have fun, for this quaint countryside is host to hundreds of events and flourishes with many attractions, recreational activities, local fresh foods, natural history, shopping, arts, wineries and a distillery. Chesapeake Country National Scenic Byway will lead you to Historic Chestertown, Rock Hall, Galena, Betterton, Millington, Kennedyville and Georgetown.

Whether cycling, bird watching, getting out on the water, taking a nature walk on one of Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge's trails, exploring history, touring or having fun at an event, you will fall in love with this very special Chesapeake Bay region called Kent County.

For more information, please visit [www.kentcounty.com](http://www.kentcounty.com) and be sure to follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.



[kentcounty.com](http://kentcounty.com)





# Discover Baltimore's Heart & Soul

African American culture and heritage come alive in Baltimore's world-class museums, vibrant arts scene and community-focused cafés. Come explore Charm City.

FIND MORE INFORMATION AT [BALTIMORE.ORG](http://BALTIMORE.ORG)

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